

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS

POST 9934 AND AUXILIARY 9934

DANA POINT, CALIFORNIA
JANUARY 2024



ALL STATE POST 2004-05, 2005-06, 2007-08,
2008-09, 2009-10, 2010-11, 2011-12, 2012-13,
2013-14, 2014-2015, 2015-16, 2016-17, 2017-2018-
2019-2020, 2021-2022

ALL AMERICAN POST 2007-08
2009-10, 2010-11, 2011-12, 2012-13, 2013-2014,
2014-2015, 2015-2016, 2019-2020, 2021-2022

2018 NATIONAL OUTSTANDING COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARD
2022 NATIONAL OUTSTANDING COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARD

COMMANDER'S MESSAGE

Greetings Comrades,

Is everyone ready for the New Year? I hope so...

We finished December with several activities and our participation in community involvement.

The holidays had our Post helping several veteran causes and getting food and Christmas toys for active-duty personnel at Camp Pendleton.

To those of you who did not get the news, our Post for the first time in our history, awarded a "Patriot of the Year" to a community member. The award this year went to the long-time supporter of the Post and friend of the VFW; Jack Loconsolo, the owner of Jack's Restaurant in Dana Point.

As Commander this year, I have instituted a yearly award for the "Comrade of the Year". This year the award went to the hard working and the ever-present Wayne Yost. He received a very nice jacket for all his hard work. Eventually the Post will have a plaque in the office listing the "Comrade of the Year" every year. My intention is for this to continue long after my term as Commander ends.

Moving forward, I have always tried to get the Post to look to the future and not become stagnant which seems to be the death knell for many VFW Posts. Changing procedural issues and minor policy changes are very important and for the most part do not affect much of the Post.

But as I have mentioned during meetings and emails, the Post website needs to improve and become much more current. I contacted other Posts, non-profits, and website users to see what would be best for our organization.

Fortunately, the best idea came from VFW itself. VFW

National has contracted Drive Path Host Solutions to develop VFW Website Solution Program. To quote from National they describe the program as: *A Website Solution that assists individual Posts, Districts and Departments in Growing Membership, Communication with Current Members, Sharing of Documents and Resources, Raise Funds, Easily Report Activities, and more. Since then, we have donated nearly 2000 websites for the VFW; and have made a lot of friends along the way.*

I will have a speaker at the January meeting to answer questions on behalf of District 1.

I can tell you that National has a grant that will pay for the first year of the website. After that the cost is approximately \$360.00 a year for the hosting and servers.

I know that change is not what we like.... But sometimes we must buckle up and move ahead.

Please respond to me by email before the meeting with any concerns.

Please be safe and be kind to each other.

Rick Jauregui, Commander.

Post 9934, Dana Point

NEW YEAR WISHES

Wishing you blessings & prosperity in 2024.

May your 2024 be filled joy.

Here's to new beginnings. Happy New Year!

The best is yet to come. Happy 2024!

Have a sparkling New Year!

Here's to what's to be in 2024!

Same time next year?

Sorry I didn't get my Christmas card out on time!

Make way for 2024!

POST PARTICPATION NATIONAL PROGRAMS

During the post meeting on December 12, the Post presented the annual elementary school TEACHER OF THE YEAR award to Mike Young, from George White Elementary School. Mr. White's students then presented their outstanding program of the Revolutionary War story of *HAMILTON*.

The Post also presented an award to Brigham Bourne, an 8th grade student at Marco Forster Middle School, as the First Place winner of the Post Patriot's Pen essay program.

In the national VFW Programs, the nominations from Post 9934 also received recognition from VFW District 2 in the following categories:

VOICE OF DEMOCRACY: Eliza Bourne, First Place, from San Juan Hills High School.

PATRIOT'S PEN: Brigham Bourne, Third Place, Marco Forster Middle School.

TEACHER OF THE YEAR, GRADES 9-12; Damon Summers, JSERRA Catholic High School, First Place.



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TO CONTACT U.S. DEPARTMENT
OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
1-800-MyVA411

JANUARY 2024 MEETING

The next meeting of the Post and Auxiliary 9934 will be Tuesday, January 9, 2024. The Post meeting will be at South Shores Church, 32712 Crown Valley Parkway, starting at 6:00 p.m.

The Auxiliary will meet at Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, 33501 Stonehill. Auxiliary meeting time is 6:30 p.m..

VFW POST 9934 SCHEDULE OF EVENTS – JANUARY 2024

- Wednesday, January 3rd, 2:00 – 4:00 Disability Clinic – Dana Point Community Center, 34052 Del Obispo St. Feel free to invite a Veteran guest so they can see what our Post does!
- Monday, January 8th. Free beginner pickleball lessons each Monday, Wednesday, and Friday 9:00 – 10:00 AM at the Laguna Niguel YMCA located off Crown Valley Pkwy. RSVP to Wayne Yost 949-357-3303 •**Monday, January 15 – Martin Luther King, Jr. Day**
- Tuesday, January 9th, 6:00 PM VFW Post Meeting – South Shores Church, 32712 Crown Valley Pkwy. •Tuesday, January 16th, 6:00 PM Dana Point City Council Meeting
- Wednesday, January 17th, 2:00 – 4:00 Disability Clinic – Dana Point Community Center, 34052 Del Obispo St.



2023 END OF YEAR UPDATE

Happy holidays! As we head into the new year, we wanted to give you a quick update on VA’s non-health benefits for Veterans. Partly thanks to the historic PACT Act, Veterans like you have applied for benefits at record rates over the past year—surpassing the previous all-time record by 39%—and that’s a great thing. As a result of your benefits applications, we at VA have been able to deliver more earned benefits to more Veterans than ever before, including \$150 billion in benefits during 2023 alone. That’s exactly what Veterans like you deserve.

Because of this record increase in applications, there has also been an anticipated increase in the number of claims applications that take longer than 125 days to process (otherwise known as the backlog), which is currently at 378,000 claims. While the total claims inventory has been decreasing over the last several weeks, the backlog is expected to grow in 2024 before returning to normal levels. We have been taking aggressive steps to address this increase and to ensure timely processing of your claims.

Here’s what this means for you:

Although the backlog has increased, you will likely receive a benefits decision more quickly than during previous surges: Right now, the average claim is processed by VA in 149 days, which is 198 days faster than in 2013 (the last time applications were nearly this high). We also process some parts of your claims faster than others, so if part of your claim is granted, you may get a first payment before your full claim is finished.

We are granting benefits at higher rates: Whenever you file a claim, our goal is to work with you every step of the way to get to “yes.” As a result of this approach, we were able to grant benefits for 65% of claims filed in 2023.

We are processing more claims than ever before: In fiscal year 2023, VA processed nearly 2 million of your benefits claims—beating the previous all-time record by 16%—and we’re on pace to break that record again in fiscal year 2024.

Most importantly, we want you to apply for benefits: We want every Veteran, family member and survivor to get the care and benefits they deserve, so we want you to apply today. We’ve hired thousands of claims processing employees in anticipation of this surge in applications, and we have 1,400 more coming onboard soon. So don’t worry and don’t wait: submit your claim today and we will process it for you as soon as possible.

We are proud to serve you each and every day. Thank you for applying for your VA benefits at record rates in 2023 and for encouraging your friends and family members to do the same. As we head into the new year, please keep spreading the word. Let’s break the applications record again in 2024—and in doing so, ensuring that as many Veterans as possible get the health care and benefits that they so rightly deserve.

IMPROVING VETERAN ACCESS TO EYEGLASSES WITH AUTOMATED ORDERING

Team develops process to reduce wait time for eyeglasses

Eyeglasses are an essential service for eligible Veterans, as vision impairment can lead to mental health concerns, falls and need for social care. VA Prosthetic and Sensory Aids Services is committed to providing all eligible Veterans with eyeglasses and, in 2023, provided nearly two million pairs of eyeglasses to Veterans.

Eye care is one of the top three busiest VHA services, and eyeglasses represent between 10-20% of VA prosthetic purchases. High demand can lead to waiting for eyeglasses and a negative experience for Veterans.

A team of prosthetic staff from Veterans Integrated Services Networks (VISN) 23 and VISN 22 recognized that manual eyeglass ordering was time-consuming.

Those two VISNs serve Veterans in Arizona, New Mexico, California, Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota and portions of Illinois, Kansas, Missouri, Wisconsin and Wyoming.

One order could be 40 steps long and take hours to complete. With a vision to improve the experiences of an estimated 1.3 million Veterans ordering 1.6 million pairs of eyeglasses, the team created 4-Sight. This software tool uses automation to improve the speed and efficiency of eyeglass delivery to Veterans.

Framing the future of eyeglasses for Veterans

The journey to 4-Sight started in 2015 when Tim Strebel and colleagues at VA Long Beach Healthcare System developed a way to automate oxygen delivery to Veterans' homes. After the practice was designated a Diffusion of Excellence 2017 VHA Shark Tank Competition winner, the successful automation process gained the attention of the VISN 23 prosthetic program.

VA employees Brian Kaiser and Spencer Mion were on a mission to improve the eyeglass ordering process. Together, the team developed 4-Sight, an adaptation of the automated oxygen delivery software tool reconfigured to reduce or eliminate processing time for eyeglass orders.

4-Sight also increases the likelihood that Veterans will receive the correct eyeglasses by ensuring vendors receive accurate patient prescription information.

In 2018, with support from VISN 23 staff, Kaiser piloted 4-

Sight at Sioux Falls VA, reducing the number of steps in the process from 40 to six. After this impressive achievement, the team was able to expand the practice across VISN 23 and VISN 22 that same year.

Spectacular results

By the end of 2018, 4-Sight saved 3,605 hours of processing time for 112,347 orders of eyeglasses. The team entered 4-Sight in Diffusion's 2018 VHA Shark Tank Competition and the practice was selected as a winner to replicate at Lexington VA and Great Lakes VA. By the end of 2019, 4-Sight had reduced Veteran wait times for eyeglasses by over 53%.

"We were able to essentially work more efficiently and provide better services to our Veterans," said Mion, noting how the improved process allows more attention for other orders, such as wheelchairs and prosthetic limbs. By improving efficiency and reliability, the practice supports VA's journey to a High Reliability Organization.

In collaboration with Diffusion, the 4-Sight team has implemented its innovation in 82 sites across 13 VISNs, processing over 4,000,000 eyeglasses orders and saving over 55,000 hours of processing time, getting eyeglasses to Veterans faster.

"The goal would be to have it at every medical center in the country," shared Kaiser. The team is on its way to achieving this vision and sustaining the practice with plans to create a web-based application with enhanced reporting features.

To learn more about 4-Sight, explore their page on Diffusion Marketplace. If you are a Veteran looking to learn more about VA eye care services, contact your VA primary care provider. Want to learn more about innovation at VA? Visit our website, scan Diffusion Marketplace, subscribe to our weekly newsletter, and explore VA Pathfinder to learn more about our opportunities.

Innovation Heroes is a recurring series from the VA Innovation Ecosystem focusing on VA employees who are driving innovation forward and improving the lives of Veterans and fellow VA employees.

[By Madison Coffey, Communications Officer, VA Innovation Ecosystem]

WHEN SANTA WORE A FLIGHT SUIT

Deployed U.S. servicemembers are always held closely in the hearts of their loved ones back home. This is especially true during the holiday season. In 1965, thousands of ordinary Americans were determined to show the troops stationed in South Vietnam they were not forgotten at Christmastime.

These folks — including many people without a family member in the military — began preparing care packages as a gesture of support and gratitude. The gift boxes they put together typically contained such treats as baked goods, sweet treats, and personal comfort items. Each parcel, often addressed to "Any Soldier (or Marine) in Vietnam," also contained a handwritten note.

There was just enough time to get a snack at the club ... before we had to depart for Japan.

Citizens from all across the U.S. took part in this spontaneous, loosely organized cause. Also joining in were corporations such as the Cott Beverage bottling plant in Scotia, N.Y., which donated pallets of canned soft drinks for servicemembers deployed to Southeast Asia.

The amount of holiday cheer collected that year totaled 761 tons. But then a new problem arose: How were all these gifts going to get across the Pacific Ocean in time for Christmas?

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TOTAL NUMBER OF VA CLAIMS LOST IN ONLINE SYSTEMS TOPS 120,000

Veterans Affairs leaders have acknowledged that more than 120,000 veterans who attempted to use department online platforms to file for benefits in recent years were stonewalled by technical problems, a total nearly 35% larger than previously reported.

Officials said they are still working to correct those errors and process those claims as quickly as possible. But House lawmakers raised concerns about the scope of the problems, some of which date back more than a decade.

“Mistakes are bound to happen,” said Rep. Matt Rosendale, R-Mont., chairman of the House Veterans’ Affairs Committee’s panel on technology, during a hearing on the topic on Monday. “But it’s unacceptable that some of these errors persisted for years before anyone discovered them.”

In late August, VA officials announced that roughly 32,000 disability claims had been lost in the VA.gov computer systems for several months or years. Two weeks later, department leaders found 57,000 more lost cases, most involving veterans who tried to add or remove dependents on existing disability claims.

More technical problems found with VA’s disability claims system

Veterans Affairs Chief Information Officer Kurt DelBene said that further reviews have found about 81,000 dependency claims misdirected within the computer system, as well as several thousand other cases in other categories.

He promised fixes as quickly as possible.

“VA.gov is the digital front door, and veterans need to have confidence and trust that their benefits and services are available, accurate, and secure,” he said.

About 26,500 of the outstanding dependency cases have now been processed and completed, and 22,500 of the outstanding disability claims finished, he said.

The department’s VA.gov site fields more than 14 million inquiries each month. VA staffers have blamed the past mistakes on software errors compounded by a lack of regular monitoring for potential problems.

While individuals whose cases were processed late can be eligible for retroactive payouts back to the original date they tried to file, the delay of months or years for those cases to be processed could have caused significant financial hardship for some veterans and their families.

Rosendale said he intends to file new legislation forcing closer oversight of the online benefits systems to avoid similar problems in the future.

“We all need to be confident that errors in VA.gov and other systems will never again be allowed to compound undetected and impact so many people,” he said.

Meanwhile, DelBene said he hopes the department will be able to process most of the remaining unaddressed cases before the end of the month.

DISABILITY PAYOUTS HELP SOME VETS EARN MORE THAN HEALTHY PEERS

Veterans with low disability ratings often earn more annually than their non-disabled peers, but those with more significant service injuries lag significantly behind other veterans in personal income, according to a new analysis from the Congressional Budget Office.

The findings come as the Department of Veterans Affairs continues to see its annual disability compensation costs rise each year. In fiscal 2022, those payouts totaled \$125 billion, almost 45% of all department spending.

Veterans with disability ratings can span a range of ailments, including physical wounds, illnesses linked to military toxic exposure, traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic stress disorder. In 2022, about 30% of all veterans in America had some compensable service-connected disability.

CBO researchers found that contrary to stereotypes, a veteran collecting disability payouts is more likely to be younger than the average veteran, be married, and to have a college degree. About one in five veterans with any disability rating are not in the American workforce.

Based on census reports and available VA data, CBO said the average earnings for male veterans with a disability rating in 2019 was \$52,200 — roughly \$10,200 (16%) below that of non-disabled veterans.

However, the range of earnings for those injured and infirm veterans varied widely. Veterans with low disability ratings (10% or 20%) averaged about \$3,100 more than their non-

disabled peers, a 5% increase. Those with ratings 70% or higher earned nearly 40% less than non-disabled peers.

The report found similar trends with women veterans. Non-disabled veterans averaged \$42,900 in annual earnings. Women veterans with a 10% or 20% rating were about \$2,300 higher (5%), while those with a rating of 70% or more were \$16,000 lower (38%).

The difference typically comes down to an individual’s ability to work, according to the report. Veterans with low disability ratings average about \$2,300 in payouts from VA over the course of a year, but have been able to maintain full-time jobs and keep pace with their peers.

“Veterans with a rating of 10 percent or 20 percent probably had relatively minor service-connected medical conditions (such as scars or tinnitus) that did not affect their ability to work,” researchers wrote.

Conversely, veterans with high disability ratings averaged \$29,200 in payouts but “had the lowest labor force participation rate,” restricting them to part-time employment or no steady work.

Researchers found similar earnings trends among veterans attending college full-time or part-time, although income from other sources — such as the VA’s GI Bill benefits — played a large role in those financial totals.

[December 19, 2023. *This article by Leo Shane III originally appeared on [Military Times](#).]*

**HAPPY HOLIDAYS FROM VA LONG BEACH HEALTHCARE SYSTEM
EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP TEAM**



FLU SEASON IS HERE!

To protect our Veterans, please see the following restrictions
(applicable to Tibor Rubin VA Medical Center and all Community-Based Outpatient Clinics):

- No children under the age of 13
- No visitors with flu-like symptoms (fever, cough, chills, or sore throat)

We apologize for the inconvenience and thank you for understanding.

Please note that Flu season is typically observed from the beginning of December to the end of March.

Flu is most contagious in the first 24 to 48 hours of infection, often before you realize you have it.

There are many steps you can take to help prevent and control the spread of the flu:

Stop the spread of germs by engaging in proper hand hygiene.

Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.

Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.

Clean and disinfect high touch surfaces and objects that may be contaminated with microorganisms.

If you are sick with flu-like symptoms (fever, sore throat, cough, runny nose, muscle or body aches), stay home and contact Occupational Health for guidance.

If you are at high risk for developing flu-related complications, contact your healthcare provider.



ORDER CPAP SUPPLIES FROM VA

Am I eligible to order CPAP supplies from VA?
 You may be eligible to order CPAP supplies from us if you meet all of these requirements.
 All of these must be true:
 You're enrolled in VA health care, and
 You're registered as a patient at a VA medical center, and
 Your VA provider has prescribed a CPAP machine

How do I order CPAP supplies?

You can order CPAP supplies online, by phone, or by mail.

Option 1: Online

You can only order CPAP supplies online if you've ordered these supplies from us within the past **2 years**.

You'll need to sign in to VA.gov to start your online order.

Option 2: By phone

Call our VA Denver Logistics Center at 303-273-6200 (TTY: 711). Then select 2. We're here Monday through Friday, 8:15 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. ET.

Option 3: By mail

Fill out a Positive Airway Pressure (PAP) Devices & Supplies form (VA Form 2346b).

You should have received a VA Form 2346b in the box with your last order.

[\[Get VA Form 2346b to download https://www.va.gov/find-forms/\]](https://www.va.gov/find-forms/)

Mail the completed form to this address: VA Denver Logistics Center
 PO Box 25166

Denver, CO 80225-0166

Are my CPAP supplies free of charge?
 You can get these supplies free of charge if both of these are true:

✦ Your VA provider has recommended them for you, **and**
 You remain eligible for and enrolled in VA health care

What CPAP supplies can I order?

You can order these supplies:

- ✦ Chinstrap
- ✦ Hoses (tubing)
- ✦ Filters (disposable or non-disposable)
- ✦ Mask liners
- ✦ Mask with headgear
- ✦ Power cord
- ✦ Replacement cushion
- ✦ Secure Digital (SD) memory card
- Water chamber

How long will it take to receive my order?

You'll receive an email with your order tracking number within 1 to 2 days of your order. Orders typically arrive within 7 to 10 business days.

What if my CPAP machine isn't working correctly?

Contact your local VA health facility. Your VA provider can order a new machine for you.

WHEN SANTA WORE A FLIGHT SUIT

(cont'd from page 4)

Many participants believed it was a job for DoD. After all, the packages were addressed to members of the armed forces serving in a combat zone. But senior military officials raised serious objections to this unplanned delivery mission.

If sent by ship, perishable goods like Grandma's raisin roundies would probably spoil before they were unloaded at one of South Vietnam's small, inefficient ports. This left air transportation as the only viable way to send mail from home. Yet Pentagon spokespeople claimed every available U.S. cargo airplane was already busy hauling high-priority materiel such as ammunition and repair parts.

The situation could have become an enormous public relations fiasco. While nobody was prepared to "bump" a planeload of urgently needed medical supplies for crates of cream soda, neither did anyone want to tell Mr. & Mrs. John Q. Citizen they couldn't mail their son in Vietnam a box of homemade sugar cookies. A Christmas miracle was needed. The Air National Guard volunteered to take on the task of delivering Christmas presents to Southeast Asia. The Air Guard had a fleet of transport aircraft and highly skilled flight crews capable of making this 22,000-mile round-trip journey; it just required the Pentagon's permission.

That permission was granted but came with some strings at-

tached. Air National Guard flight crews had to volunteer for these so-called "training missions," which meant they couldn't be mobilized (but did receive pay for their service). Operation Christmas Star began Nov. 20, 1965, when a Boeing C-97 Stratofreighter aircraft from Tennessee's 164th Air Transport Group (ATG) left Nashville for Vietnam filled with 4,500 pounds of holiday treats and mail. A total of 77 Air National Guard transport planes would follow over the next five weeks. Retired C-97 command pilot Col. Jack Meachem, who served with the New York Air National Guard's 109th ATG, remembers Christmas Star vividly.

"Our route started in upstate New York," he said, "and we flew to Travis AFB in California the first day. On day two, we went on to Hickam AFB, Hawaii. Then on the third day, we [flew] to a flyspeck of an island called Kwajalein."

Next, Meachem's Stratofreighter stopped overnight at Clark Air Base in the Philippines before making one final hop into Da Nang, South Vietnam, on day five.

Operation Christmas Star succeeded brilliantly. The generosity of Americans back home, assisted by Air National Guard aircrew members like Meachem, helped make the 1965 holiday season a less lonely one for many of the 200,000 U.S. service-members stationed in far-off South Vietnam.

POST OFFICERS FOR 2023-2024

Post Commander:	Ricardo Jauregui	Service Officer:	Aaron Pluff
Senior Vice Commander:	Richard Alonzo	Service Officers Team:	Jim Socks
Junior Vice Commander	Carlos Garcia		Don Ellis
Post Quartermaster	Bill Manes		Ben Valencia
Assistant Quartermaster	Wayne Yost		John Coon
Post Chaplain:	Ronald Egigian	Service Officer Advisor	Marty Hoffman
Post Surgeon	Gil Castro	Service Officer Support	Debbie Yost
Judge Advocate	Dolores Padgett		
Adjutant	David Vera	Trustee (3-year term)	Robert Pruitt
Women Veterans Coordinator	Marcia Kuehl	Trustee (2-year term)	Scott Roberts
Post Color Guard Captain	Carlos Garcia	Trustee (1-year term)	Richard Carr

AUXILIARY OFFICERS FOR 2023-2024

President	Lisa Mers	Trustee 3	Judy Brandmeier
Junior Vice President	Sharon Miller	Trustee 2	Sharon Miller
Treasurer	Cindy Somerville	Trustee 1	Mary Koebler
Secretary	Terry Marr	Chaplain	Yvonne English
Guard	Tory Boegeman	Conductor	Ralph Mariano



JANUARY 15

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